

EPA's Framework for Community-Based Environmental Protection Summary

What Is the Purpose of the Framework?

The purpose of this document is to provide EPA with a policy and planning framework for supporting and implementing community-based environmental protection (CBEP) over the next three years. The *Framework* identifies specific goals, strategies, activities, and measures of success for EPA in implementing community-based environmental protection. EPA is asking interested individuals and organizations to review the Agency's draft *Framework* and suggest any ways that EPA can enhance the effectiveness of its planned actions.

What Is Community-Based Environmental Protection?

Community-based environmental protection (CBEP) is a holistic and collaborative approach for addressing environmental issues by bringing together public and private stakeholders in a place or community to identify environmental and public health concerns, set priorities, and forge comprehensive solutions. Through this process, stakeholders consider environmental protection along with human social needs, work toward achieving long-term ecosystem health, and foster linkages between economic prosperity and environmental well-being.

Core Principles. Community-based environmental protection can be implemented in varying ways in different places. EPA, however, has identified a set of key principles to guide the Agency's efforts to implement the CBEP approach. The core principles of CBEP are:

- ◆ Focus on a definable geographic area.
- ◆ Work collaboratively with stakeholders through partnerships.
- ◆ Assess, protect, and restore the quality of the environment in these areas.
- ◆ Integrate environmental, economic, and social objectives.
- ◆ Use the most appropriate regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to address community and regional concerns.
- ◆ Monitor and redirect efforts through adaptive management.

What CBEP Is NOT. It is:

- ◆ Not a separate new program, a special limited initiative, or a pilot project.
- ◆ Not regulatory relief or a replacement of regulatory authority and program activities.
- ◆ Not solely better outreach, public relations, or stakeholder participation.
- ◆ Not focused on one environmental medium, problem, or component of a community.
- ◆ Not intended to disrupt existing state-local government relationships.

Why Is CBEP Important?

Many of the environmental problems we are aware of today cannot be solved through traditional command and control approaches that address only air or water or solid waste in isolation. EPA recognizes that all resources in a particular place are interconnected and need to be addressed holistically. Furthermore, not all parts of the country have the same problems or need the same solutions. Effective solutions can be achieved more effectively with the involvement of members of the community.

EPA believes that the CBEP approach can help us achieve our mission by integrating our activities in ways that complement and increase the effectiveness of our regulatory programs. This approach also will enable us, in cooperation with our state and local partners, to address those environmental problems that are not easily addressed by traditional regulation. Through CBEP, EPA can help communities create a vision of environmental health and quality of life and pursue activities that will achieve that vision.

EPA's CBEP goals

- o To achieve EPA's mission and program goals
- o To support communities' efforts to use, protect, and restore natural resources in ways that help ensure long-term ecological, economic, social, and human health benefits.
- o To help communities address environmental concerns not amenable to traditional federal regulatory approaches.
- o To promote integration of EPA programs and activities in ways that complement and augment the regulatory framework, and to deliver our programs and services in ways that enhance sound community-based decision-making.

What are EPA's Community-Based Environmental Protection Goals?

Because CBEP is an approach - or a way of doing business - and not a separate program, the specific goals of EPA's authorizing statutes and base programs (i.e., Air, Pesticide and Toxics, Solid and Hazardous Waste, and Water) are also EPA's CBEP goals. CBEP actively supports the Agency's mission, program-specific goals, and the principles as stated in EPA's Strategic Plan.

Achieving all of EPA's statutory mandates and base program goals, however, would still not produce a sustainable environment. By taking a holistic and collaborative approach that considers the relationship of a community's environmental concerns to its economic and social conditions, EPA can help communities develop solutions that are both comprehensive and sustainable.

How Does EPA Plan To Implement The CBEP Approach?

EPA's role in CBEP will vary from place to place. In some places, EPA might lead the effort and work directly with communities as an active partner in designing and implementing effective environmental solutions. In most places, however, EPA's role will be far more limited including, for example, providing information and tools to states, communities, and the public.

As an Agency, EPA will adopt three strategies for implementing CBEP:

- ◆ **Reorient Agency programs** to incorporate CBEP as an integral approach that will enhance EPA's ability to meet its goals and statutory mandates.
- ◆ **Build the capacity** of states, local agencies, community groups, individuals, and other stakeholders so that they will be able to address problems more effectively.

- ◆ **Participate in places** that need and/or require EPA leadership or direct involvement. EPA Regional Offices will need to develop priority setting processes and methods to identify and select new geographic areas that require significant Agency resources. Any process for targeting places will consist of three key components:

✓ Assessing the Need for EPA's role
Does the area distinguish itself as needing or requiring EPA Regional-level attention and resource focusing?

✓ Level of Ecological/Human Health Risk
Are the risks to humans and natural resources significant?

✓ Judging the Likelihood of Success
Will the Agency's involvement produce tangible short-term and long-term results?

Possible Criteria for Selecting Places for EPA Participation

Assessing the Need for EPA's Role

- ✓Resources of national significance
- ✓Requires multi-media effort
- ✓Transboundary concerns
- ✓Community needs currently unfulfilled

Determining Ecological/Human Health Risk

- ✓Ecosystems at particular risk or of importance
- ✓Exceptional risk to human health
- ✓Disproportional impact on minorities or low income groups

Judging the Likelihood of Success

- ✓Community capacity and readiness
- ✓Availability of Agency resources

Examples of key actions EPA proposes to implement under these strategies during the upcoming three years are presented in Figure 1.

How Will EPA Measure CBEP Results?

The Agency must be able to demonstrate the progress CBEP makes toward realizing environmental results and helping the Agency achieve its goals. EPA recognizes the difficulty in developing measures that are sufficiently flexible to reflect local and regional variation but still permit some national summarization. The Agency also recognizes that most CBEP activities require years before they can demonstrate actual environmental results. Performance measures must be capable of measuring *progress toward* goals as well as *achievement* of goals.

EPA proposes three types of measures that it will refine over the next three years:

- ◆ **Activity Measures.** These measures enable EPA to gauge progress in the acceptance and use of CBEP approaches within EPA and by others outside EPA. They also will provide a profile of the various ways CBEP activities are implemented.
- ◆ **Environmental Results.** These measures gauge actual changes in environmental conditions.
- ◆ **Measures Related to Sustainability.** These measures, when added to the environmental measures, seek to describe changes that determine whether future generations will enjoy a stable, healthy environment.

Proposed Types of CBEP Measures

CBEP Activity Measures

- ✓ Characterization of EPA's CBEP activities
- ✓ EPA's capacity to engage in CBEP activities, including organizational change and staff expertise
- ✓ EPA's efforts to build the capacity of other groups to engage in CBEP activities through information and other tools

Measures of Environmental Results

- ✓ Environmental and human health measures used by EPA's program offices

- ✓ Other urban and natural ecosystem measures

Measures Related to Sustainability

- ✓ Economic measures of sustainability
- ✓ Social and cultural measures of sustainability

How Can You Provide Comments on EPA's Framework for Community-Based Environmental Protection?

This summary provides highlights of the draft *EPA's Framework for Community-Based Environmental Protection*. Please send your comments on the *Framework* to:

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Figure 1: Examples of Proposed EPA Actions for CBEP Implementation

Proposed Strategies	Proposed Actions
Reorient EPA programs for CBEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Establish an EPA CBEP Leadership Committee to expedite and ensure implementation ▶ Dedicate funds from each of EPA's national programs for CBEP activities ▶ Identify opportunities for integrating CBEP approach into EPA's media and supporting programs ▶ Work with states/tribes to develop joint CBEP goals, strategies, and measures for agreements w/ EPA ▶ Identify options for increasing EPA funding flexibility and travel funds to support CBEP projects ▶ Assess Agency's CBEP training needs, and inventory, develop, and deliver CBEP training activities
Build capacity of EPA's partners and community stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Establish a work group to improve the collection, sharing, and use of Agency information ▶ Review EPA's research, assessment, and monitoring activities to determine their application to CBEP and usefulness to communities ▶ Work with other Federal agencies/NGOs to develop and implement joint strategy for capacity building ▶ Create an on-line, searchable database containing information on CBEP funding sources
Select and work in priority places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop targeting and selection methods within each EPA Regional Office for determining in which places EPA will participate directly as a stakeholder ▶ Develop specific plans for each place in which EPA is directly involved as a stakeholder to establish the Regional Office's objectives, role, and milestones
Measuring and Tracking CBEP Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop and pilot measures and indicators, processes for tracking, and opportunities for consolidated reporting for EPA's CBEP projects and activities ▶ Develop and implement strategy for tracking and reporting CBEP consistent with GPRA's accountability system